

John Q. Offender  
C/o Offender's Parents  
123 Main Street  
Anytown, USA

January 1, 2003

Re: VORP Probation Requirement

Dear John:

The Probate and Family Courts, of Charlevoix and Emmet Counties, sponsor the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP). This is a community corrections program which attempts to facilitate court ordered agreements between victims and juvenile offenders. (A more detailed description of the program is enclosed). It is my responsibility to assist young offenders in satisfying their VORP probation requirement. One of your probation orders is the requirement to participate in VORP and pay restitution as determined.

The victims of the MDOP have agreed to meet with you at a mediation. Your mediation meeting is scheduled for:

**January 15, 2003**  
1:00 PM  
at the  
**Charlevoix County Probate & Family Court**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Charlevoix County Building

At that time, you will be given an opportunity to: 1) make a genuine apology; (2) share what the Court has ordered you to do; (3) explain in detail your actions and thoughts in regard to the crime, and answer all the victim's questions; and (4) prepare a written and signed contract as to how you will reimburse the victim's losses. **At least one parent or guardian must attend.**

If you have any further questions, I can often be reached at (231) 547-7214 on Mondays and Wednesdays or (231) 348-1776 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please leave a message if I am unavailable.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Cochran  
VORP Coordinator

## **VICTIM OFFENDER RECONCILIATION PROGRAM**

### **VORP**

As its name implies, VORP is an attempt at making whole, a relationship that has been violated by a crime. It has been described as restorative justice versus punitive justice.

It brings offenders face-to-face with the victims of their crimes, with the assistance of a trained mediator. By facing their victims and learning first-hand the effects of their crime, offenders come to realize that they have hurt a real person. Their offense is not simply a property crime or an act against a nameless faceless person. The victim is an individual who has suffered in any number of ways: physically, emotionally, mentally, and financially. Crime is personalized, as offenders learn the human consequences of their actions.

VORP offers victims the opportunity to speak directly to the individual who has hurt them, where they are able to ask the often haunting questions that only the offender can answer, such as: "Why did you do this to me? Was this my fault? Could I have prevented this? Were you stalking or watching me?" With their questions answered, victims commonly report a new feeling of peace of mind. While VORP is voluntary for the victim, it is strongly encouraged. Victims who are initially fearful of the process, often report that the sessions gave them closure and satisfaction. It is not uncommon to see meaningful and sometimes miraculous reconciliation between the parties; part of the freedom inherent in acts of forgiveness.

VORP is usually ordered by the Court as one of the probationary terms for the offender. A VORP representative then contacts the offender to explain the process. Offenders are encouraged to take meaningful responsibility for their actions by first apologizing, and then by mediating a restitution agreement with the victim, to restore the victims' losses, in whatever ways that may be possible. Restitution may be monetary or symbolic; it may consist of work for the victim, community service or anything else that creates a sense of justice between the victim and the offender. Studies show that offenders who participate in this mediation program are less likely to offend in the future, thereby benefiting the entire community.

If you have further questions, concerns, or problems, please call the VORP Director: In Charlevoix County, that number is 231-547-7214. In Emmet County, it is 231-348-1776.